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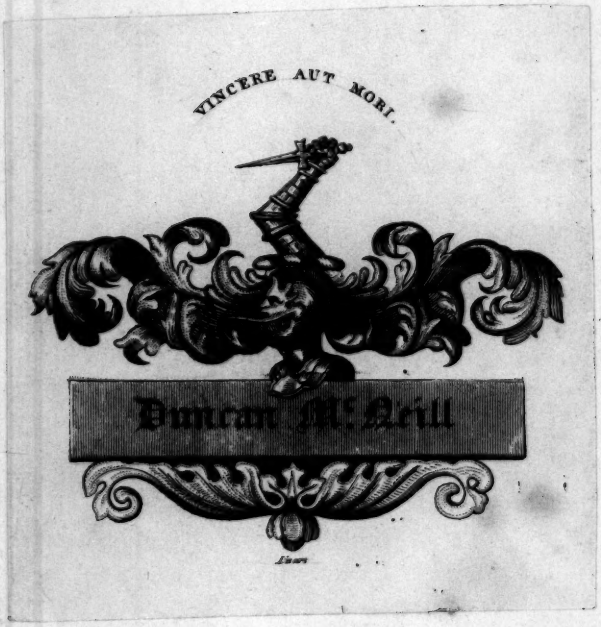

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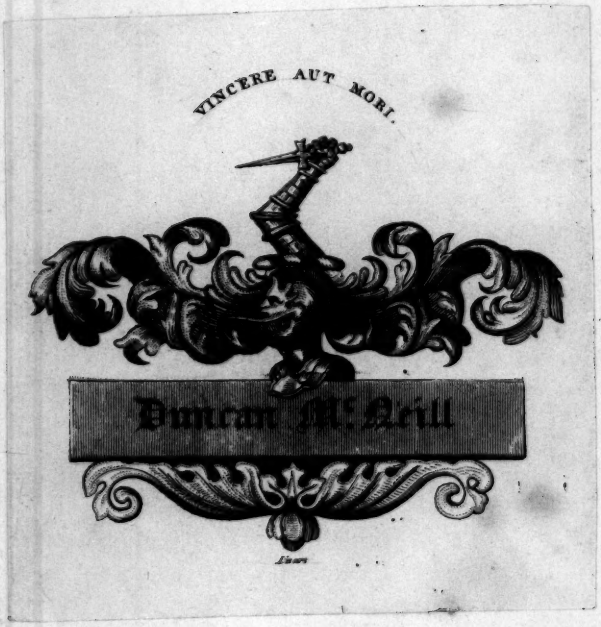

THE ADVENTURES OF A NIGHT:

OR, THE

Island of *Absurdities*,

A

VISION.

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THE ADVENTURES OF A NIGHT, &c.

IT has long been the Opinion of the greateſt Philoſophers, that perfect Happineſs is not attainable on this Side the Grave; nevertheleſs, I muſt confeſs myſelf ſo ſingular, as to have always imagined that the greateſt Felicity exiſted in *Content*: So that whatever Station Fortune may have allotted us in this World, if we can but acquire that Bleſſing, we are ſure to be happy. Though like moſt other old Men, I am ſomewhat dogmatical in publick, yet I am endued with ſo much Patience as to be able to peruſe an Author in my Cloſet, whoſe Sentiments, on this, or any other Topick, may not be exactly agreeable with my own.

Poſſeſt with a Deſire of having my Ideas of Happineſs either confirmed or aboliſhed, I dipt the other Day into an old muſty Author upon that Subject; but his Eſſay, which tended to prove, that true Happineſs was not to be enjoyed, even in the utmoſt Acquiſition of our Deſires, had ſuch an Effect, as inſenſibly to lull me to ſleep, and produced the following *Viſion*.

Methought there appeared before me a young Man of an engaging Countenance, and commanding Aſpect: He was as beautiful as can be imagined, and had an Air that demanded Reſpect and Admiration. He ſtood ſilent for a Moment, and then accoſting me with a Smile, and giving me his Hand, he ſaid follow me; I obeyed, and immediately we were conveyed acroſs ſome narrow Seas, to the moſt delightful Spot of Ground that ever my Eyes beheld: At laſt, my *Ætherial* Guide alighted on the Summit of a Hill, whence we could command a Proſpect of the adjacent Country, which I obſerved to be well water'd by ſeveral fine Rivers that were almoſt covered with Ships of conſiderable Bur-

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Burthens. I perceive, ſaid I to my Guide, that this is a Place of great Trade, pray what may be the Name of it? Take heed, replied he, of Miſtakes; for I aſſure you that this is none other but the *Iſland* of *Abſurdities*; and thoſe Ships that you obſerve yonder are not trading Veſſels, but *Men of War* and *Privateers:* For you muſt know, that as this is a Place where the moſt glaring Contradictions prevail, the Inhabitants have long ſince waged War againſt a Nation that uſed to traffick with them for their chief Commodities; and by neglecting ſufficiently to diſtreſs that Nation by Sea, while they had it in their Power, they have inſenſibly, as I may ſay, engaged themſelves in a Land War on the next Continent, againſt a powerful Ally of their former Enemy, where, ſhould their moſt ſanguine Wiſhes prevail, they would be certain of coming off Looſers. The Governor himſelf is abroad, being gone to viſit ſome Territories of his where he was born. How, ſaid I, the Iſland at War, and the Governor abroad? ſurely no Place can have ſuch Charms as to incline him to leave this delightful Place in the Time of Danger?—— You are miſtaken again, replied my Guide;

for their is no Danger of any Enemies attacking them here :—But let us take a thorough View of the Iſland before you make your Remarks upon their Conduct. No ſooner had he ſpoke, but we were immediately conveyed to an old Brick Building ; in one of the Apartments of which were two young Ladies moſt compleatly formed, and of exquiſite Beauty : They ſeemed, methought, in very earneſt Diſcourſe ; and, upon liſtening to them, I found they were railing againſt Matrimony, and ſtrengthening each other in the laudable Reſolution they had taken of living ſingle. I was very much ſurpriſed on hearing ſuch a Diſcourſe between two ſuch young and beautiful Creatures ; but more ſo, on my Guide's acquainting me, that they were the Governor's Daughters : I enquired if he had no Sons ; yes, replied my Guide, one of them commands the *Army* on the Continent, the other is here ; we ſhall viſit him preſently. I ſuppoſe, ſaid I, that he which is abroad is a General of great Conduct? My Guide made me no Anſwer, but ſuddenly I found myſelf in a ſpacious Room, that had a fine Proſpect over ſome delightful Gardens, with a River running at the Foot

of

of them: At the upper End of the Room ſat a middle-aged Man, playing on a Harpſichord, and ſinging to it: I enquired of my Guide who the Gentleman might be that was thus innocently diverting himſelf? He anſwered, that it was the Governor's eldeſt Son: I could not forbear expreſſing ſome Amazement on his amuſing himſelf in ſuch a Manner during his Father's Abſence, when one would have thought, that the Government of the Iſland would have ſufficiently occupied him: But my Guide aſſured me that he had no Concern in it; and that the Care of the Iſland was left in other Hands. How, ſaid I, is not this Gentleman to ſucceed his Father in the Poſt? Is he not of Years of Diſcretion, and the ſooner he begins to practice the managing the Reins of Government, were it not the better? It may be ſo, replied my Guide; but if the old Gentleman thinks otherwiſe it is nothing to us: Do not expatiate too much on theſe Things till you ſee farther. He had no ſooner ſaid the Words, but methought we were immediately conveyed into a Room where there was about twenty Perſons ſitting round a Table, ſeeming to be conſulting ſome very earneſt Buſineſs.

neſs. Amongſt them was a Prieſt, who made a long, but elegant Speech to the reſt, upon the Benefits accruing to the *Iſland* by being engaged in a War on the Continent; alledging, though in an exceeding beautiful and lively Manner, that the only Way to keep a War from their own Doors, was to carry it to their Neighbours. He talked a great deal about *ſincere Friends*, *ſtrict Performance of Engagements*, *ſtrong Alliances*, and reaping the Fruits of a *Victory:* When, upon Enquiry of one of the Attendants, I was informed, that the Board had juſt received Advice of an Action's having happened between their Army, and that of the Enemy, very much to the Diſadvantage of the former. He concluded his Oration, by adviſing them, in a very pathetick Manner, to exert their utmoſt Force on the Continent; as they might never, perhaps, have ſuch another Opportunity of diſtreſſing the Enemy. Surpriſed as I was, I could not forbear reflecting on the Difference between the Doctrine of the Clergy in that Country, and ours; for with us their Doctrine is the Words of Peace. No ſooner had the Prieſt ended, than a thin, grave, well-looking Gentleman expreſt himſelf very earneſtly:

earneſtly: His Voice was ſomewhat of the weakeſt, ſo that I was obliged to draw nearer to him, and ſoon perceived that the Tenor of his Diſcourſe was to recommend the obtaining a Peace, upon honourable Terms, as ſoon as poſſible, as they were not able to prevail with their Friends to aſſiſt them to the utmoſt of their Power; and ſince none were appriſed of the pernicious Conſequences of another Defeat. The Perſon that made this Harangue, my Guide informed me, was an able *Soldier*, and an expert *General*. I thought it odd to hear the Warrior plead for Peace, and the Prieſt for War; but turning myſelf round to enquire of my Conductor how it happened that ſo conſummate a General was not engaged in the Field? I perceived ſomewhat like an old Woman ſtanding, wrapt up in a large Cloak in one Corner of the Room: Her Looks were ſo very ſour, that I had ſcarcely the Courage to aſk her Name; when my young Guide informed me it was the Goddeſs of *Diſcord*; and on perceiving her to make ſome Motion towards the Table, he adviſed me to withdraw: We inſtantly quitted the Room, but were hardly got down Stairs before all the reſt of the Company followed us.

Bleſs

Bleſs me! ſaid I to my Guide, this Iſland is full of Contradictions; nothing but Abſurdity appears amongſt them: How happy might theſe People be, could they be brought to a right Way of thinking! I am afraid, replied he, that you have caught the prevailing Infatuation of the Country, as you talk ſo much of Impoſſibilities; but that you may have a thorough Inſight how far the Humour extends, let us proceed to take a View of one of their Courts of Juſtice. Inſtantly methought we were tranſported into a large ſpacious Hall, crouded with Lawyers; at the upper End of which a Court was ſitting, and were juſt then trying an Action of *Treſpaſs*: The Council, who were four on each Side, pleaded very vehemently, ſo that I was in great Suſpence which Party would get the Day, till the Jury found for the Plaintiff, with Six-pence Damages, but without Coſts; though the Caſe had been of above two Years ſtanding, and each Party had been at the Expence of ſome hundreds of Pounds. Well, thought I, this is going to Law with a witneſs, to fling away hundreds to recover Six-pence! This Cauſe was

no

no ſooner determined, but another came on, which I found was between two eminent Councellors, concerning an Eſtate that each of them had attached for his Client's Fees: But the Arguments on both Sides were ſo very plauſible, that the Court deferred giving their Opinion till another Day.

As the Trial of theſe two Cauſes took up a conſiderable Time, I found myſelf very weary, and aſked my Companion to retire; when we were met by a Perſon raving, curſing and ſwearing like a Madman, declaring, that though he had but one hundred Pounds left, out of two thouſand, he would ſpend it every Half-penny in Equity ſooner than be wronged. My Guide underſtanding that I wanted ſome Refreſhment, we were inſtantly conveyed into a Place ſomewhat reſembling one of our Coffee-houſes, where we found ſeveral Merchants agreeing together to fit out a Privateer to cruiſe on the Enemy, to recover the Damage they had ſuſtained by loſing a great Number of their Ships; but unfortunately their Stocks were ſo very low, that, amongſt them all, they were not able to make up an *eighth* Part of

the Money that was neceſſary for their Enterprize. While they were diſcourſing, methought a Perſon came haſtily into the publick Room, and declared, that the Enemy had taken two of their Men of War, and a large Sloop: Upon this the Houſe was all in Uproar, ſome blaming the Captains for not defending themſelves, others the Miniſtry for entruſting their Ships of War to ſuch cowardly Commanders: Every one was in haſte to deliver his Opinion; all ſpoke, but none heard: When News came, that one of the Ships was arrived in Harbour very much ſhattered, after having had a ſmart Engagement with the Enemy. This immediately changed their Tones, inſomuch that their former Cenſures were turned into Panegyricks, highly extolling the Courage of the Captain for fighting at ſo great a Diſadvantage as two to one.

My Guide, methought, then ſaid to me, as you have viewed theſe different Scenes of Buſineſs in this Iſland, I think it will not be improper to pay ſome Regard to their Diverſions, that you may be better acquainted with the Genius of the Inhabitants: Therefore, we

will

will proceed to one of their Places of greateſt Reſort. I teſtified my Conſent, and we immediately ſet out; and, paſſing through a pleaſant, but ſmall Park, we arrived in ſome ſpaciou s Fields, where I perceived that the Graſs had juſt been cut down, and ſeveral Men and Women were at work in Hay-making: While I was attentively obſerving their Manner of Work, in turning and ordering the Graſs, there appeared four Men entering the Field: The Women that were at work ſeemed to expreſs ſome Uneaſineſs, and fell to gabbling one among another, like a Flock of Geeſe when they are diſturbed: But moſt of the other Sex changed Colour, and grew as pale as Death, looking rather like ſo many Ghoſts than Men. The four Men that had entered the Field, came up to two of the luſtieſt of the Hay-makers, and told them, that they muſt go to ſerve the Governor and their Country: The two Men trembled like Aſpen Leaves; and another of them being ſomewhat too attentive to their Diſcourſe, the Officers laid Hands on him alſo, the reſt fled: but they carried off theſe three without any other Moleſtation than the Noiſe, ſcolding and crying of the Women, whoſe

Tears, in this Caſe, were not ſo prevalent as to releaſe their Companions. As I was ſomewhat aſtoniſhed at the Sight, not being able to conceive the Policy of taking Men from their Work in the Field to ſerve the Governor, I was obliged to ſeek Information of my Guide, who informed me, that the War on the Continent was the Occaſion of it; and that Men were become ſo very ſcarce by the Loſſes that the Iſland had ſuffered abroad, that the *Officers* were glad to take them any where: But, ſaid I, ſurely it muſt be a great Detriment to the *Farmer*, whoſe Work they are employed in, to have his Hands taken out of the Field at a Time when they are of moſt uſe. If he does not get in his Harveſt, how can he pay either Taxes or Rent? That cannot be helped, replied my Guide; the Reaſons of State in this Country are of a Piece with the reſt; and though it might, perhaps, be conſiderably cheaper for the Inhabitants of this Iſland to hire two Men abroad, than to furniſh one from home: yet as *Abſurdities* abound, this muſt be ſuffered. He was going on, when we perceived ourſelves drawing nigh to the Houſe of Pleaſure, whither he propoſed to bring me to.

The

The Building without was exceedingly agreeable to the Eye, being in the Form of an *Amphitheatre* ; the Inſide was moſt magnificently decorated with Carvings, Gilding and Painting ; Crouds of the Inhabitants were aſſembled in the Area, and heavenly Muſick reſounded through the Dome. At firſt I was ſo very attentive to the melodious Harmony of the vocal and inſtrumental Performance, that I forgot to make any Obſervations on the Company, which at that Time was very numerous ; but as ſoon as I had recovered myſelf from my Extacy, I was ſomewhat ſurpriſed to find one half of the Company were craming themſelves with Food, as tho' they had been half ſtarved. I enquired of my Guide, whether their Senſes of hearing or taſting, in this Country, were ſo nearly linked together as to be gratified at the ſame Inſtant! He informed me it was the Cuſtom of the Country ; and, like other *Abſurdities*, not to be accounted for.

While I was entertaining myſelf, partly with my own Reflections, and partly with the Pleaſures of the Place, a Lady approached me,

me, whoſe lower Garment extended itſelf above three Yards from the Place whereon ſhe ſtood. I was contemplating the Benefits that might ariſe to her from a Garment of ſo prodigious a Diameter at Bottom: When the Muſick ſtriking up a freſh Air, diverted my Attention another Way. We continued in this delightful Place while the Company laſted, and then, methought, we were tranſported into a large Study of Books; in which was a fat elderly Man, very intent on compoſing ſome elaborate Piece. My Curioſity incited me to peep over his Elbow as he wrote, when, to my great Surpriſe, I found that the Work he had Hand in was a Treatiſe on curing the Bite of a mad Dog, by drowning the bitten Perſon. I had thought, that however ſtrong the *Abſurdities* of the *Iſland* might appear in their *Divinity* or *Politicks*; yet, that the Practice of Phyſick would explode them: But I found myſelf very much miſtaken, and therefore left my learned and ingenious Phyſician to finiſh his wonder-

working

working Eſſay by himſelf, not having the Patience to endure the Peruſal of ſuch ridiculous Chimæras.

My Guide inſtantly conveyed me into a large Room, where there were ſeveral ſeemingly grave Perſons in Conference together, and Abundance of ſtrange *Apparatus*'s was diſperſed about the Chamber: I was exceedingly puzzled at firſt to determine what was the Subject of their Thoughts; but found, on Enquiry, that they were trying Experiments to make Lightning by Electricity, in order to annoy their Enemies, and ſave the Government the Charge of Gunpowder. I would fain have tarried to ſee the Succeſs of their Preparations, but my Conductor giving me to underſtand, that I ſhould detain him too long, we departed and left thoſe *Virtuoſi*'s to compleat their ſalutary Deſign.

We were got, methought, in a very great City, and traverſed divers Streets, Lanes and Turn-

Turnings; when, paſſing by a large Houſe, my Ears were ſaluted with the Noiſe of a Parcel of Children at play: I could not be eaſy, methought, till I looked in at one of the Windows, where I perceived ſeveral little Boys and Girls playing about the Room, and a Man in a deep Study with a Book on his right Knee, rocking a Cradle, in which was a young Child. The Volume I could diſtinguiſh was *Grotius* on Peace and War: This Perſon ſeemed ſenſible of the Pleaſures of domeſtick Peace, and frequently caſt his Eyes from his Book to his Children, whom he ſeemed to regard with all the Tenderneſs that can fill the Heart of an indulgent Parent. Upon his looking up, I imagined that I had ſeen him ſomewhere before; but not being able to recollect the Place, my Guide called me, when it inſtantly ſtruck into my Head, that it was prodigiouſly like the Perſon I had ſeen but a little before amuſing himſelf at his Harpſichord: But as my Conductor had ſomewhat that he thought extraordinary in

view

view, he would not permit my returning to ſatisfy myſelf.

We rambled about the Town a conſiderable Time, where I could not help obſerving a Number of large Temples in narrow Streets, and ſmall Temples in ſpacious Openings. This, my Guide informed me, was the Taſte of the Iſland; but I am ſure in ſome Countries, ſuch a manner of Building would be accounted a Soleciſm in Architecture. We came, at laſt, I thought to a large Houſe, and entered into a Hall almoſt covered with Bags of Money. Bleſs me! ſaid I, to whom does all this Coin belong? To the Inhabitants, replied my Guide. Upon my ſaying they were immenſely rich, he informed me, that no one could be ſaid to be rich till their Debts were paid; and that the People of that Iſland owed more Money to their Neighbours than what I ſaw in that Place. I obſerved Numbers flocking in with Bags of Money, and

going away with Paper, ſeemingly well contented with the Exchange. This continued for ſome Time; but, on a ſudden, the People returned back with the Bits of Paper, and retook their Coin; which, whatever might be the Occaſion they returned in ſuch Shoals, as it was almoſt impoſſible to get into Place: And what ſurpriſed me was, that thoſe who were appointed to tell the Money out to them, far from making ſuch Haſte as the Eagerneſs of the People ſeemed to demand, rather loitered away their Time, chuſing to pay them in ſuch ſmall Pieces of Coin as required the greateſt Time and Difficulty in telling.

Thence, methought, my Guide conducted me to the Side of a fine large River, in which lay a Fleet of Ships; and looking very wiſhfully at me, *Happineſs*, ſaid he, pointing to the Shipping, *is not attainable in Mortality: Were the Natives ſenſible of theirs, they would place*

place it only here: He inſtantly diſappeared: The Noiſe of a Drum, that I thought I heard from on board one of the largeſt Ships, waked me. When I perceived it was only a poor lame Drummer, juſt arrived from *Flanders*, that was begging at my Door.

F I N I S.